

# **Times Shadow: Dancing with the Echoes of Distant Immortality**

By

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aphelion | ˌæpˈhiːliən |

noun (plural **aphelia** | ˌæpˈhiːliə | ) *Astronomy*

the point in the orbit of a planet, asteroid, or comet at which it is furthest from the sun

perihelion | ˌpɛrɪˈhiːliən |

noun (plural **perihelia** | ˌpɛrɪˈhiːliə | ) *Astronomy*

the point in the orbit of a planet, asteroid, or comet at which it is closest to the sun

## Prologue

In the end, at the fall of mankind and the dawn of a barren planet once known as Earth, it began like a fabled myth or a story from an age of honour and valour. There was no beginning to what became known in the final days of humanity as the Temporal War, as there had always been a war as long as there had been a time to recount. But as the days and the months merged into one, thus came the advent of mankind and their greatest invention and worst creation at one and the same time.

The room was empty save for a cream leather suite, a coffee table with an open book resting on it and a desk which held nothing more than, a disused ashtray and a few old letters addressed to Clare Adams which had remained unopened for nearly ten years. Suddenly, without interruption a man walked into the room swinging the door open with motivation and energy. As he did so, he realised that he had started something that could not be undone, a reversal process within a highly complex neural network, housed within the room. Simply by moving within the room, as he desperately searched for it, a change began within the book that could not be stopped. As he slowed, imperceptibly to his senses, the electrical discharge flowed around the edges of a picture within the open book, on page 23. The picture was of a woman standing with her arms outstretched as though reaching out to some unknowable truth. It was then that Clare Adams finally appeared casually and without even so much as a blemish on her perfectly stylistic haircut.

Clare's all knowing smile was a shock to the man in the room that had once been empty. The fear in his eyes was all terrifying, despite this he summoned the strength to approach the apparition fearing it might be a hologram or some other technological machination. Her appearance was not without some structural damage to the property which now lay in a state of disrepair due to a lack of proper maintenance in an age where the most important factor in survival on the planet was to keep moving. It was Clare who spoke first, her voice was soft and calmingly serene, without any knowledge of the war for time or the machines that seemed to just keep getting stronger and stronger with updates and upgrades scheduled by the picosecond. "Chandler I presume?" she turned to him without moving her body at first, not because she didn't want to, but because she couldn't. That was the problem with jumping through temporal portals, it wasn't an exact science when they created it, thus the technology pre-war was still in it's infancy. They had attempted to make adjustments to the past, present and future and the dark light that encompassed the living memory of the machines in the guise of this pleasant young woman was as though she honestly didn't know what was happening.

"He's coming." Chandler, who was dressed in what were barely rags designed to be more efficient as a use of material due to the machine rations on essential and non-essential materials, products, services and goods.

The beginning was the same as the end. Everything lay still, silent and unmoving; as though there had always been an emptiness, devoid of all things save for matter. The very substance that bound the void together was the very substance that was ripping it apart at an equal and opposite level of force per square inch. Time itself was no

longer bound to the laws of physical attraction that surrounded space, matter and all things. As a result the special relationship that Space and Time held between one another was no longer the same, it was in actuality unravelling.

Volume I

*Imperator*

The space with which it displaced was slowly coming into phase with the new reality as the first vestiges of the ship formerly known as The Geodesic protruded from the rip in space and time.

“Board the bridge there.” began the immortal leader of the machine army as he transitioned between one part of the consciousness of the machines and another knowing that the rotating axes of his transitions were almost unending as far as his calculations were concerned. He had finally arrived at the dawn of humanities greatest achievement, Time Travel.

It had taken years to reach this point, in which the idea of infinite warfare had been lost to her. She was the last of them, the very last human being on the planet. The epic scale of the eradication of the human race from the planet was now a foregone conclusion. As she moved past the masses of camera’s and machinery associated with the end of humanity a chill wind licked her face in the manner with which her rose tinted cheeks began to blush as the blood rushed to her face. She knew that there was a possibility that he was dead, that they were all dead. She dared to look in the direction of the sky as the feeling dawned upon her. She was becoming one of the them.

“Come now my dear, you thought that it would be that easy?” his voice sent a cold chill down her spine as the hairs on the back of her neck stood on edge. The emptiness of Times Square was beyond mere words, it seemed cold and bare, as though stripped of all life, even the birds that perched on the street first thing in the morning looking for some rubbish were missing from the thoroughfare of people and masses of cars, taxis, trucks and buses offloading goods and services as well as people. The only sound that could be heard periodically was traffic signals in the distance as the machines towered over the only life form left on the planet that was sentient and capable of stopping all of it.

## Volume II

### *Abigail*

Her suit which looked like a thinly veiled shard of metal reflected the light perfectly in 360 degrees in every direction such that she looked like a beacon shining brightly in the empty darkness of the half lit city landscape. It would be dawn soon and with the coming of the light came the equal and opposite danger she had failed to stop so many times before. *What made her think this time would be any different?* Far from the reality of the stars and the planets, comets and celestial bodies that had been recorded in bygone periods, the cracked surface of the planet just beyond Neptune that had become an extra-solar entity was moving to the orchestral song of the heavens in a solitary manner. The majestic nature of the smallish planet, small in comparison to planet Earth was similar in size to Mars, but unlike the barren planet that would be, Sinus Meridiani was fast becoming the only planet in the solar system that could house life. The water was completely frozen on the surface and had been so for near on three and a half billion years as it circled in a widening spiral outwards from the point with which the gravitational axes had pulled the matter and space dust required to create its core. It's simple balance of atmospheric pressure and stillness in comparison to the remainder of the planets had once clung to the gravitational pull of the hydrogen core of the sun which was by now completely exhausted prior to the Red giant phase of the undying light of the sun. What had once been the solar system now remained a collection of icy worlds, distant from all of reality, having been transformed into frozen relics of a catastrophic war beyond all things, lost to the reaches of time itself.

### Volume III

*Hugh*

On a rocky crater composed of Photonic crystal shaped like an Eagles beak, the suns orange glow slowly rose in prominence over frozen lakes and frozen rocky landscapes. The effervescence steadily crept its way heavenwards towards the rocky crater as though the suns appearance were sudden and badly timed. As the atmosphere warmed, mountains of ice shrank and warmed, turning into water and replacing the liquid methane. One lake in particular just underneath a mountain began to melt in a strange twist of fate, waking up to its own biological possibilities, thus enjoying its first moments in centuries, in the sun. It's planetary orbit flitted between heaven and hell as it were in which it maintained a stable and evolving climate of beautified mountain peaks and troughs that were surrounded by water.

Above the planet a satellite flew in an elliptic orbit speeding up and slowing down at certain points. It was measuring the ice deposits that surrounded the planet and signalling to the coming armada of space vessels whilst pointing at a geostationary point. The surface of the planet was lighting up from the view of the satellite which seemed to be self powered and automated. As the evacuation of planet Earth began, the planet Sinus Meridiani continued to show signs of promise as a result of the inexhaustible amount of technological and scientific machinery and components which lay strewn across the surface of the new shared home of humanity.

## **Chapter 1 - Agatha**

“I fucked up..” her rushed voice sounded distant on the old blood splattered monitor. There were fingerprints of dried blood strewn all over the control room, alongside broken bits of communications equipment.

“Time, like it matters these days..” her voice echoed throughout the darkness.

“..I never had enough of it when I was younger, and now, all I have is time.” the emotion within her voice was unbecoming of someone in her position but then again, she was the last human being alive in the universe. It had taken a lot to catch her and now she was ensured in a trap.

#### Volume IV

“I stare at the television and laugh behind unwavering eyes that hold more than secrets as to how not to fear the unthinkable. You wouldn’t believe me if I told you but there was once an outbreak after war was declared on China. Rationing was re-instituted, along with national service, not that nations existed after the first of them appeared on a street in South Africa. The machines sent to cure an outbreak alongside marines of every nation.” suddenly and without warning, the dimensions of the room changed allowing a series of people to appear through what looked like a large floor standing speaker which was bolted to the floor as lights and panels began to flash out of control, yet still the voice of Agatha played back.

“At first we, the British thought it was the Koreans, then the Russians, then the Swiss and then finally our old ally America. But actually it came on a boat from an impoverished nation, by dinghy in the most undignified of manners. Now, I could throw in some sentiments of human dignity, risk to life and limb as well as the danger of contagions on foreign soil from infectious disease, but in an age of infectious disease the poor bastard was just another victim to something we now know to be the Human Syndrome. That is to say, none of us cared about the woman with HIV who worked for nothing to support her kids. None of us thought twice about their single mum, killed by a virus that was probably man made.



## Volume V

The sick were the first to go, and then come back. They'd get this god awful fever and the sound they made was not like any sound I have ever heard in a zombie movie. Fear is something that I didn't show, ever. Apart from this one time. they could smell it, along with everything else. Sex, sickness, puke, body odour, blood even. They could smell it all and they didn't fear a god damn gun.

It began in autumn, they called it an outbreak or something. An extinction level event as it were. But none of us, the survivors could have foreseen what was coming in the form of an epidemic of the sort you don't just recover from when it's over after taking some antibiotics. I stayed in a high-rise flat, one of the kind most people discover after years of travelling around the world. Me, I was a science student, flunking because of the substance misuse habit I'd discovered after many years of soul searching. Christ, I was a junkie and I didn't even know it.

## Chapter 2 - Dale

“You have to remember that this is all a memory but I can still see their faces, you know, the faces of the people who surrounded me and surround me still. The guy in the pizza store, the guy serving you in a Starbucks or a Costa coffee barista. For me, the fear comes when I try dialling the police, only to discover they have one in there, a survivor, immunised and free of infection. They could turn at any minute and all the person on the other end of the phone can think of is the problem with the globe, fuck the crime, or the technology to control it. Welfare reform ceased to matter and the thing with race and identity is, I just don’t dig Gil Scott Heron any more; you know, that song where he talks about the “Revolution will not be televised...””.

Volume VI

*Agatha*

“Outside, if you listen, there’s a group of guys standing around each other, not a care in the world. One of them was a zombie, the other two killed zombies during the infestation years; now thats real because the fear that is shared amongst all survivors is a fear that none of us can return to. Its a fear of death and the stench of human remains in the mouths of children and men, women and animals alike. The thought of a dog being eaten in the strictest of senses is an unthinkable thing. Now imagine being the one eating that dog. It’s entrails in your mouth whilst its reanimating carcass attempts to make sense of the new reality it’s facing as a single celled bloodthirsty killing machine. Picture the birds falling from the sky and forgetting their wings; god damnit, the birds couldn’t even fly, they just ran on the ground eating dead bodies and squeaking all sorts of noise. Everything that had breath and life was affected by this animalistic but more than animalistic break from foraging for leaves or eating grass, flying above hills and mountains or swimming to the other side of the world.”

### **Chapter 3 - The Dumont twins**

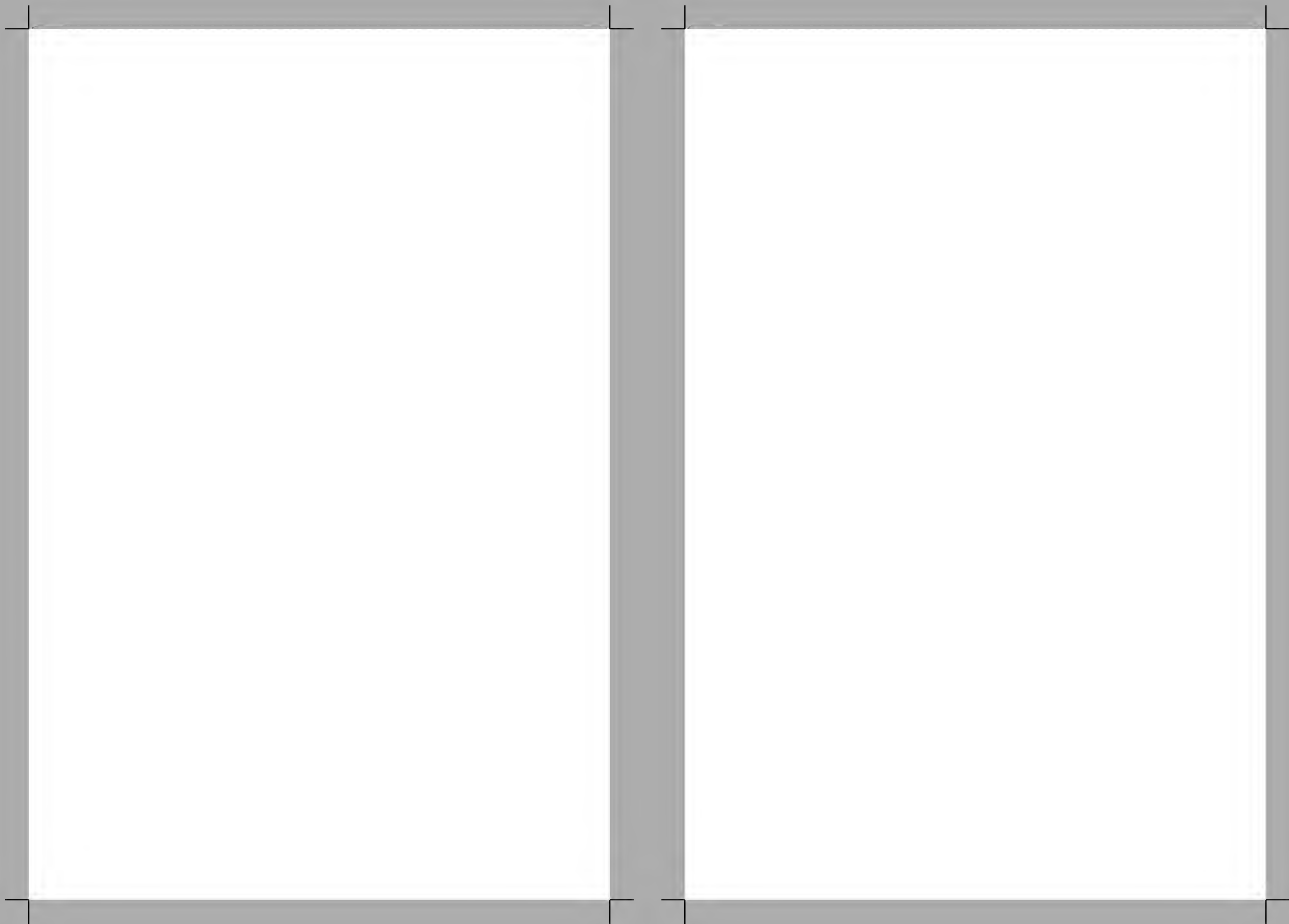
#### *Rain*

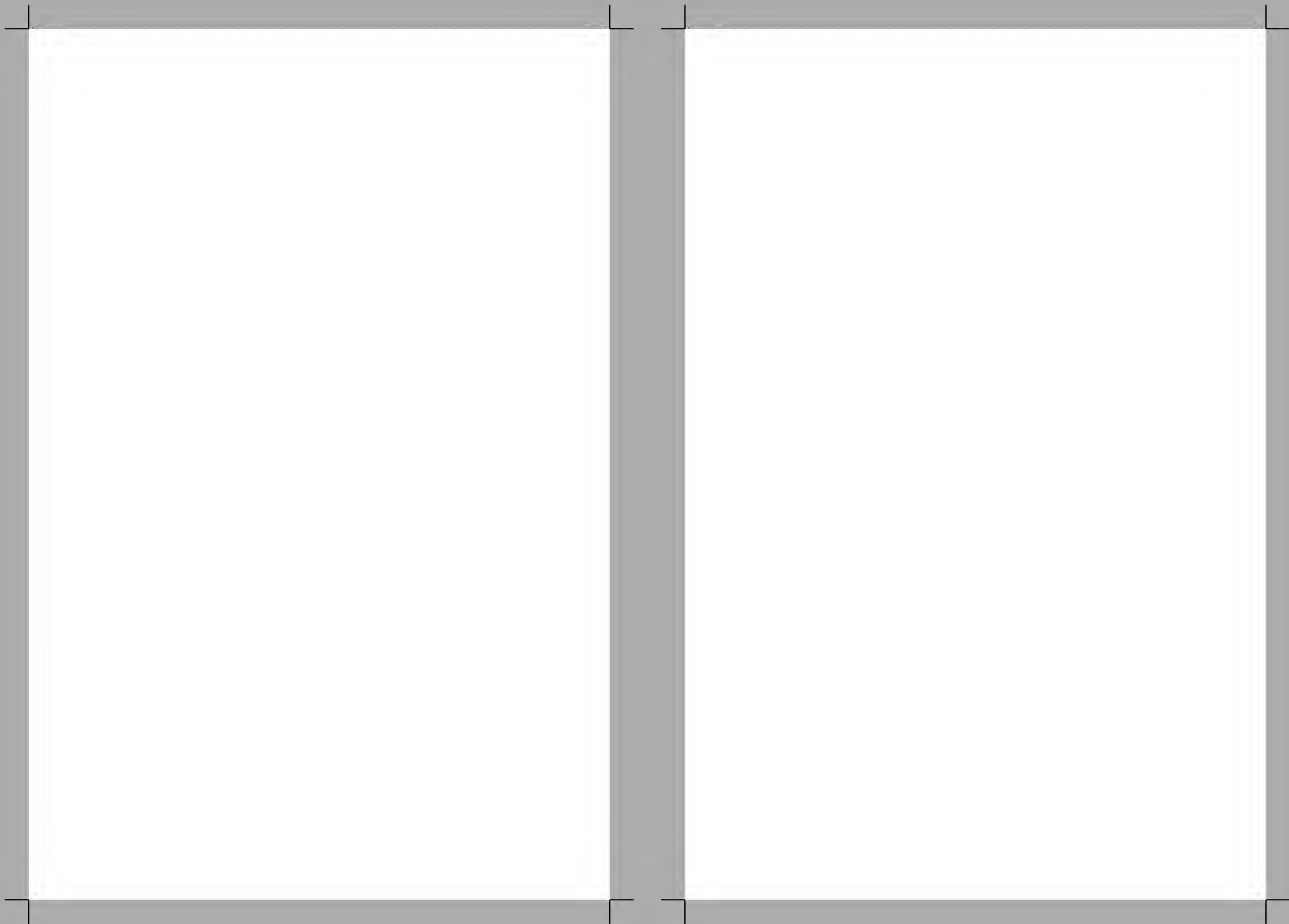
“Some people thought it was the former president and the nobility of the age who had implanted the thoughts in the commanders and chiefs of staff of every nation; a sort of rich list of who was going to survive the new age. Problem was, the gene that controlled who was affected in the first instance, in the first case, was the same gene that was shared by only about 20,000 people around the world. Imagine that. 20,000 people surviving on a planet interspersed with 7 billion plus people. Those who had technology, money and wealth on their side faired just as well as those who didn’t have money riding on them. The welfare state, slums like the place I grew up didn’t exist now, but then, they were everywhere.”

Volume VII

*Raven*

“Equality is the buzzword people bandy about like its a game. The only thing I hate more than Hitler, as an individual with a probable cause justified in destroying any hope for backwards time-travel, and yeah, Zombies. Lucky for us, when the quarantines started and the gene therapy and the Cull Zones and Close Protection Orders began flying thick and fast, there was no way to stop because, mankind has a destructive edge. A razor sharp wit and an iron grin, but when it comes to the question of whether you would kill your husband or wife if she turned into a crazed flesh eating cretin from hell, i’d ram a fork in her nose just to get to her brain , or through the eye, or better yet, a screwdriver in the ear. But then again, I survived”.





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